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THE WHITE HOUSE
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The Defense of Berlin if Cuba is Blockaded

A. Preliminary considerations.

1. The defense of Berlin is already politically fragile, in that there is no certainty of the responses of most other NATO countries under very severe pressure. Only the Federal Republic and the U. S. are really strong, and they are frequently suspicious of each other.

2. A Berlin blockade imposed in ostensible response to a blockade of Cuba would inevitably stir feeling among all Europeans that this crisis was in some measure the fault of the Americans. No matter how different the two cases, the simple psychological equality of "blockade for blockade" would be powerful.

3. It is a strong probability that Khrushchev would trade Berlin for Cuba any day; such a trade would be a heavy net loss for the U. S.

B. Possible alternative scenarios.

1. Khrushchev might simply accelerate his peace treaty procedures and let a blockage of access come as a result of this process. This is probably the most favorable case for us, since it would re-emphasize the very shaky ground on which Khrushchev himself is proceeding, and somewhat minimize the direct parallel between his course and ours. Yet it has a certain likelihood because of the degree to which the Soviets are already on this track.

2. More dangerous, though perhaps a shade less likely, would be an immediate interruption of access explicitly stated as a peace-loving means of controlling the imperialist aggressors. This would take the form of interruption of U. S. access, allied access, or general access. It could be screwed up and down in a

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neat parallel to our Cuba effort. Its object would be at a minimum to force us to lift our Cuban blockade while the Berlin crisis continued unresolved, and at a maximum to take Berlin.

C. Our responses.

In principle, our immediate response under all these contingencies would be governed by our present contingency plans. These plans are slow and incomplete and they depend for their execution upon a degree of allied resolution which is uncertain even now. Under prolonged blockade, with us sharing the blame, the morale of Berlin would be very likely to crack, and no one would fight a nuclear war for a dying city.

The general consequence is that if we were to be able to meet effectively a new Berlin blockade, with a Cuban blockade as its immediate cause, the weight resting upon the U. S. would be enormously increased. We should have to shorten our reaction times, increase the directness and force of our responses, and be prepared to confront Khrushchev at a very early stage with a bluntly nuclear choice. This is a direct reversal of our current posture in a number of ways, but without it I do not believe that Berlin can be held.

And at the best such a confrontation could hardly lead to a lifting of the Berlin blockade without a parallel relaxation in Cuba. And then where would we be? Castro would be there still. His weapons system would be there still, and covert supply could be continued.

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